

## **What is typhoid fever?**

Typhoid fever is a disease that is caused by bacteria and common in many countries of the world. In recent years, most cases in the U.S. have been acquired during travel to other countries. Typhoid fever is caused by *Salmonella typhi*. It is an entirely different disease and is not to be confused with illness caused by *Salmonella typhimurium* or *Salmonella paratyphi*.

## **Who gets typhoid fever?**

Anyone can get typhoid fever but it occurs more often in people arriving from tropical areas, or in travelers visiting countries where the disease is common.

## **How is typhoid fever spread?**

Most people get typhoid fever by eating or drinking food or water that has been contaminated by people with the disease, including by those who do not have any symptoms. Raw fruits and vegetables, milk, and shellfish are the types of foods most often associated with illness.

## **What are the symptoms of typhoid fever?**

People with this disease may experience mild or severe symptoms. The symptoms of typhoid fever may include fever, headache, general discomfort, lack of appetite, and a dry cough. The heart beat slows and the spleen enlarges. Some people get rose spots on the trunk of the body. Constipation or diarrhea may occur. Some people do not have any symptoms.

## **How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?**

The symptoms may appear from 3 days to 3 months after exposure, with a usual range of 1-3 weeks.

## **How long can an infected person spread this disease?**

The disease may be spread to others as long as the bacteria remain in the stool. Some people with typhoid fever may carry the bacteria for weeks to years. About 2%-5% go on to become permanent carriers. Carriers are persons who are not ill from the disease but may spread it to others.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

Examination of stools in the laboratory is the most common way to diagnose typhoid fever. The bacteria may also be identified in blood and other body fluids.

## **Do infected people need to be excluded from work or school?**

Most people may return to work or school after they recover from the disease, as long as they carefully wash their hands after using the toilet. The health department will assess each situation in which the person with typhoid fever is a foodhandler, health care worker, or day care worker or attendee. Persons will not be allowed to return to these

settings until they have multiple negative tests for the bacteria and the health department approves their return to usual activities.

**What is the treatment for typhoid fever?**

Specific antibiotics may be prescribed by a doctor to treat typhoid fever.

**How can typhoid fever be prevented?**

The most important precaution is careful hand washing after each toilet visit and before preparing and/or eating food. Persons who live in the house or have other close contact with a person who has typhoid fever need to be tested for the disease and may not work in foodhandling until they have multiple negative tests. A vaccine is available that provides some protection for persons traveling to areas where the disease is common. Persons traveling to these areas need to be careful about what foods and water are consumed.

